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UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON

INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

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PRESS CONFERENCE

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MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Ladies and gentlemen, welcome. Thank you, Congressman, for coming.

I am going to introduce you.

Good afternoon and welcome to the release of our newest report on North Korea, "A Prison Without Bars:

Refugee and Defector Testimonies of Severe Violations of Religion in North Korea."

My name is Michael Cromartie and I'm the Chair of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom.

I'm joined by my fellow Commissioner Imam Talal Eid, and also Scott Flipse of the Commission staff.

We're delighted that Congressman Royce is able to join us for a few minutes and can be with us.

And so, before we begin our program, we're going to hear from Congressman Royce, who is a senior member of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific, and Global Environment, and serves on the Financial Services Committee.

The congressman also serves as the Co-Chair of the Congressional Caucus on Korea, and is Vice Chair of the U.S.-Republic of Korea Inter-Parliamentary Exchange, and is a member of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus.

You need to know that Congressman Royce introduced H. Con. Res. 234 calling on the government of the People's Republic of China to respect the human rights of refugees from North Korea.

This legislation passed in the House in late October 2007, and Congressman Royce continues to draw attention to the growing North Korean refugee crisis and the humanitarian disaster going on inside that country.

And so, it's an honor to have him here to give us some remarks on North Korea.

Thank you, Congressman.

REPRESENTATIVE ED ROYCE (R-CA):

Thank you, Michael, very much.

I just want to express my gratitude.

I think all of us concerned with human rights are very, very appreciative of what the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom has done here. I would have to say, for those of us who have had the opportunity to travel, or speak to defectors, speak for those who have survived the gulags in North Korea, it is hard to convey - it is very difficult to convey just how traumatic these experiences are.

But over the years, as the co-chairman of this inter-parliamentary exchange, I've had the opportunity to go to South Korea and actually to go up into Korea recently, into North Korea, and to see the conditions under which people struggle.

And I have to tell you, to sit down and hear from those who have survived this tell you, as one dissident said, you can't even say the word religion without potentially having your family put away in the gulag for three generations.

It can get you killed.

Another said, you know, we get a little - (inaudible) - if you have the right connections.

But if you get caught carrying a Bible, there is no way to save your life from the gulag.

And what is so outstanding - and this report documents it - what is so outstanding is just how traumatic those conditions are in the gulag.

People are not speaking about loss of their life in hyperbole.

I have to tell you, I have seen the films - many of you probably have as well - smuggled out of North Korea, of the summary executions committed against some who have tried to escape.

And I have talked to young people, a young woman from North Korea who did escape, who told me about how her brother was caught and sent back and executed by the North Koreans.

So "A Prison Without Bars" documents this treatment.

But it also focuses on another issue that I would just like to speak about briefly.

It's an issue we've raised with the government in China when we've had delegations there.

And that is the fact that China repatriates the North Korean refugees to a very drastic fate when they are returned.

And so, our hope is that China will keep its commitment.

Right now, the Olympics - the period to the Olympics - now is the time for reports like this to focus attention on the government in China to make it live by the international norms of civilized behavior that it has itself signed and committed to, and that right now, it is not conducting in terms of its treatment of North Koreans.

We have a new president in South Korea, President Lee, who frankly, I think, wants to deal with North Korea as it exists today, not as we hope it will be.; and wants to be realistic about what we can do to help North Koreans who have defected.

And I think that they will get a much more hospitable treatment in South Korea and will be more expectation that in agreements between North Korea and South Korea, they be on a level playing field, a level playing field.

And my hope is that human rights - and certainly South Korea's vote in the United Nations on the Human Rights Council to extend the mandate of the Special Rapporteur monitoring rights in North Korea was an important statement for the South Korean government.

So I hope President Lee continues to highlight this issue.

When I meet with him on Thursday, I'll be eager to hear his thoughts on this.

And let me also say that I don't think as human beings that any of us have the right to ignore North Korea's human rights nightmare.

Frankly, the treatment of their own people, as Andrei Sakharov once said, the Soviet dissident, is something of a reflection on how you want to treat your neighbors.

So I think we should all demand North Korea - and put pressure and leverage on North Korea, demand that it treat its citizens with some amount of human dignity, especially when it comes to the practice of freedom of religion.

And again, I thank you on the Commission for your work.

MR. CROMARTIE:

Thank you, Congressman.

Thank you very much.

Would you be willing to entertain any questions from the press?

REP. ROYCE:

Absolutely.

If the press would like to ask any questions, I'd be happy to answer.

MR. CROMARTIE:

Anybody have any questions for the congressman?

Please raise your hand.

Yes, ma'am

And if you don't mind identifying yourself.

Q:

My name is Stephanie Wong with Asahi Shimbun.

In light of this report, what do you think it says about the current negotiations with North Korea?

REP. ROYCE:

Well, again, it calls into question the importance, as Ronald Reagan used to say, trust but verify.

When you have negotiations as part of the Six-Party Talks, we have to be able to verify.

We should be certain that we verify on the uranium enrichment, that we verify on the plutonium to make absolutely certain that North Korea deals honestly in this transaction.

If we can't get the verification, then my concern would be that North Korea would abridge or would violate the agreements that they are signing onto.

So that is my worry.

My suggestion to our negotiators - and I met with Chris Hill recently - let's make absolutely certain that this agreement is verifiable.

MR. CROMARTIE:

Yes, ma'am.

Q:

(Inaudible) - of MBC - (inaudible) - in Korea.

You've made a very precise and strong statement against North Korea regarding better treatment on the refugees and in regarding human rights conditions in North Korea.

Do you have any plans to take any measures at the congressional level against North Korea so that it could improve its treatment on its citizens?

REP. ROYCE:

Yes, as mentioned earlier, I was the coauthor of North Korean Human Rights Act.

And what I am attempting to do right now is to pressure North Korea and China.

China, with the Olympics underway, as I mentioned, gives us a lot of leverage.

And so I've been part of an ongoing campaign to bring this pressure to bear on Beijing to be part of a solution, and for Beijing also to send a message to North Korea, because half of the subsidies that keep the regime alive come from Beijing.

And what we need to do is have as a condition of that support, that aid that comes over the border, instead of the money going - you send the food going - (inaudible) - the food, as I have told other governments, needs to go to the North Korean children, because I've seen how malnourished they were.

When I was in North Korea, I had an opportunity to see the stunted growth, and I've certainly seen it from the defectors who have come across the border.

And so, my urging of the international community is let's do this with our aid.

Let's change the rules so that it no longer goes to the government in Pyongyang.

Let's make sure that the aid instead goes to the countryside and to the poor children.

And right now, that's not happening.

And I've talked to French NGOs and other NGOs who told me the same thing.

A lot of the aid they give ends up on the Pyongyang food exchange with the money sold flowing to the capital to support various, to support the government itself, or that food going to the military.

So these are all changes in policy that we need to bring, along with radio broadcasts in North Korea.

I am the author of legislation to expand radio broadcasting.

One of the things I'll be talking to President Lee about is a reversal of the policy that does not allow private broadcast from South Korea into the North.

Why, because I've had a chance to listen to Vaclav Havel and others who once lived under a totalitarian system in Poland or the Czech Republic or where have you or wherever, tell me about the importance of those radio broadcasts that they used to listen to as young people and how it changed their understanding and opinion.

And I think you also understand that in North Korea, there is evidence of debates going on inside the North Korean Politburo about, you know, listening to these broadcasts.

Why, because by giving this information to people throughout society in North Korea, you can change the environment in the society; and so this is an initiative that I think is important that the South be allowed private broadcast and it's also an initiative that I am going to continue to stand

by, our Radio Free Asia broadcasting out there.

Thank you.

Q:

Just one follow-up.

You are to meet President Lee Myung-bak on Thursday.

REP. ROYCE:

Yes, with the Speaker.

Q:

Would you personally deliver this message to President Lee?

REP. ROYCE:

Yes, this is one of the topics that I want to talk to the President about, that I'm anxious to talk to him about.

I met him before but not in this capacity.

And I must say, I authored the resolution welcoming him to the United States and congratulating him on being elected president.

And so, I'm very anxious for this meeting and I look forward to discussing these issues.

Thank you very much.

And again, I thank the Commission.

MR. CROMARTIE:

Thank you, Congressman.

Thank you for coming.

REP. ROYCE:

We have a bill announced on the House floor that I'm supposed to be speaking on.

MR. CROMARTIE:

We understand and thank you for coming by.

Well, let me continue, if I could by introducing you to this report and to the Commission.

The Commission is an independent bipartisan federal commission that advises the president of the United States, the Secretary of State, and Congress on how to promote religious freedom and associated rights around the world.

It was created by the U.S. Congress in the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, known as IRFA.

There are three things we want to discuss today on the eve of the summit between President Bush and South Korean President Lee.

First, why is religious freedom an important strategic issue?

Second, we want to highlight China's obligations to protect refugees.

And third, we want to propose several priorities for the upcoming Bush-Lee Summit.

But first, let me just give a few details about this report that, hopefully, you picked a copy up of outside.

This report is an update of the Commission's 2005 report, "Thank You, Father Kim

Il-Sung: Eyewitness Testimony of Severe Violations of Religion and Belief in North Korea."

That report was based on interviews from 38 North Koreans who found refuge in South Korea from 2004 to 2007.

In the report, refugees testified to the forceful suppression of North Korea's once vibrant religious life, the ongoing strength of the quasi-religious cult of personality centered on Kim Il-Sung and his son, Kim Jong-II, and the survival of very limited religious activity in North Korea.

The former North Koreans also offered stringent testimony on the role and character of Kim Jong Il's government and the extent to which it controls the thoughts and beliefs of the North Korean people.

They speak movingly of the conditions they face when they're being repatriated from China, including torture, hard labor, and imprisonment.

The world, very sadly, has grown accustomed to the stories and atrocities and excesses in North Korea.

Still, concrete evidence about life in North Korea remains difficult to obtain, particularly testimony about specific violations of the freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief.

This new book, "A Prison Without Bars," which allows former North Koreans to speak openly about the terrible conditions they faced in both North Korea and China, is intended to open the window among the world's most closed societies.

The evidence presented here is important to policymakers, to diplomats, to experts, to NGOs, to writers, to journalists.

Among our findings were these: conditions along the China-North Korea border are uniquely hazardous for North Korean refugees as security agents target refugees believed to have visited Chinese churches for food aid or other forms of immediate assistance.

Refugees who admit under intense interrogation to having had contact with Christians while in China often receive particularly harsh punishments.

According to former North Korean security agents who were also interviewed for this report,

there is increased police activity aimed at halting religious activity in the border regions of China, including setting up mock prayer meetings to entrap new converts in North Korea and training security agents in Christian traditions and practices for the purposes of infiltrating churches in China.

Also, North Korean security agents overseeing the detention and also brutal interrogation of North Korean refugees classify their efforts as counterintelligence work, as it is believed that South Korean missionary activities aimed toward North Korean refugees is a cover for conducting espionage.

Why, among the many issues - the many pressing issues that the international community faces in North Korea - why should we focus on religious freedom?

Well, because repression of religious freedom is a violation of international norms and as such, is concern of the international community.

Despite its claims made in U.N. treaty bodies, North Korea is a severe violator of religious freedom and many other related human rights.

When we read the stories told by refugees, there is no doubt that the government of North Korea deliberately represses every significant internationally guaranteed freedom, including freedom of religious expression, freedom of movement, freedom of association, and it has subjected its own people to force famine, torture, and even to slave labor.

Religious activity continues, separate from allegiances required for the cult of Kim Il-Sungism.

But what exists officially is tightly controlled and used as a diplomatic tool.

There are churches and temples in Pyongyang but they are mostly to impress foreign tourists and guests and help channel foreign assistance and humanitarian aid to the North Korean government.

Buddhist temples are maintained as mostly tourist and heritage sites.

Clandestine religious activity continues.

Some Buddhist, Christian, and traditional folk beliefs continue to exist in North Korea in spite of this profound repression.

Interviewees describe the widespread, albeit illegal practices relating to Shamanism or

traditional folk belief such as fortune-telling.

In rural and urban areas alike, both the elite and the poor will seek out the services of fortune tellers in defiance of government bans.

And according to interviewees, even government officials still approach fortune tellers.

Now, let me turn the mike on over to my colleague Imam Eid to provide further information on China.

Imam?

IMAM EID:

Thank you.

North Korea continues to quickly oppress any perceived challenges to its authority, including new ideas, information, or trends started by international contacts or through cross-border trade.

The spread of Christianity through cross-border contact is viewed as such a challenge, allegedly requiring a security approach.

Security officials draw a distinction between recent converts who acquire religion while in China and all believers whose families have been multi-generational religious devotees.

New religious converts are targeted for especially stringent punishments as the growth in Christianity is perceived as a security threat.

MR. CROMARTIE:

Imam, let me interrupt you because Senator Brownback is here.

IMAM EID:

Okay.

MR. CROMARTIE:

Senator Brownback.

SENATOR SAM BROWNBACK (R-KS):

Hi, gentlemen.

Sorry to interrupt.

MR. CROMARTIE:

Thank you for coming.

Thank you for coming, Senator.

Ladies and gentleman, we're glad to have Senator Brownback with us.

As you know, Senator Brownback is a member of the Appropriations Subcommittee on State Foreign Operations and related programs and a member of the Joint Economic Committee and the Judiciary Subcommittee on Human Rights and Law.

The senator also serves as the co-chair of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus, is the cofounder and co-chair of the Religious Prisoners' Congressional Taskforce.

And I have four more paragraphs I could tell you about Senator Brownback.

Do you want me to tell them all that?

SEN. BROWNBACK:

No, not at all.

MR. CROMARTIE:

Well, thank you for your support of this issue and of this Commission.

We're grateful to you today, and thank you for coming by.

SEN. BROWNBACK:

Thank you for holding this and I want to thank the participants as well and I really appreciate you highlighting the lack of religious freedom in North Korea and doing extensive work and interviewing and highlighting this issue.

It's happening; it's taking place; and Google Earth has made it such that we can no longer deny it visually as well.

I want to put forward, if I could, in front of you some outlines of satellite photos from DigitalGlobe.

The details in these images have been confirmed by North Korean defectors living in South Korea.

Some of the defectors are guards; others are former prisoners.

And what I want to do is just to show to you that while we may have denied things happening in the past, saying, well, we're just not certain about it, we now have pictures.

We have corroborating evidence.

We have witnesses that say that this is different and it's happening.

The U.S. Committee on Human Rights in North Korea estimates that already 400,000 people have died in these camps.

These are the gulags that we're going to be showing you pictures of here today and we already are estimating 400,000 people have died.

Although our diplomats do not raise such uncomfortable topics in the discussion with North Koreans, those camps are the scenes of crimes against humanity, the scale of which rivals some of the past crimes against humanity.

The first photo is Camp 22, where it is alleged that chemical experiments were conducted; and of all the camps, this is the most brutal.

There are no known surviving prisoners who have made it out of Camp 22 in spite of its size

and use.

It is 400-square miles in size.

It's about the size of Los Angeles.

The former guards we contacted were able to identify its electrified fences and moats.

They were able to point out the huts where its prisoners live; the coal mines where men are worked to death; and the forest and fields where the dead are discarded.

It's not difficult to trace the circumference of Camp 22 on Google Earth.

The camp is surrounded by electrified barbed-wire fences in which vegetation has been cleared away.

Sharp corners in the fence lines make it impossible to confuse the roads.

And look carefully at the center of the courtyard, the middle of the guard station, at this picture.

That's the second one that Julie is now putting up.

You can see what appears to be a group of people.

We'll never know who those people are but it's entirely possible that this remarkable photograph shows a new group of prisoners being brought into Camp 22.

In this next photograph, you can also see the railroad gate into the camp.

If you were to following this railroad to the right for a short distance, you would come to the Chungbong coal mine, the camp's main industry.

Over the railroad gate, you can see a catwalk connected to a guard post, which the guards use to check to make sure no prisoners hide in the coal cars that roll past underneath it.

This next picture, here's one of Camp 22's largest barracks area, just south of the coal mine.

From above, it doesn't look that much different from other towns in North Korea.

As the problems in Tibet show, China is a serial violator of human rights, including the repatriation of those who flee North Korea in search of food and freedom.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom has worked diligently to draw international attention to the violation of the most fundamental basic human rights of North Koreans.

"A Prison Without Bars," through interviews with North Korean refugees, offers valuable information about religious freedom and conditions, or really lack thereof, of religious freedom in North Korea.

There are some who will say that human rights concerns are peripheral to a bilateral relationship that aids in prosperity and security.

They would advise patience and argue that North Korea will eventually bring greater individual liberties and political freedom.

But the lessons of recent history are clear.

Economic freedom and political freedom cannot be separated.

Citizens want to experience undiluted liberty; and governments who try to check this desire will find they're swimming against the current of the human spirit.

One more person suffering under this oppressive regime in North Korea is one too many.

As we work to ensure human rights in North Korea, and as we fight to get the attention of international actors focusing on the ongoing abuses of Kim Jong Il's regime, the United States must continue to push North Korea to bring an end to the torture of its own citizens.

The people of North Korea have the same dignity inherent to all people and deserve nothing less.

And I want to point out, as well, to all the focus on China recently, and the torch going around the country and the abysmal record of China in Tibet, the abysmal record of China in Darfur.

There is an abysmal record of China in its treatment of North Korean refugees that end up - that move through China.

In that sense, I think we should highlight China's role as the great enabler of human rights abuses around the world.

And that's what they're doing - and that's what they're doing, as well, in North Korea.

I met with a number of North Korean refugees that have made it to this country.

I say a number - I've met with most of them.

We haven't had that many that have come here.

I hope more do come to the United States.

But all the work that I've done in North Korea and the people I met with talk about the terrible treatment of people of faith in North Korea, of people being killed for their faith, of people being sent to various gulags for practicing their faith.

The complete absence of religious freedom and that's why I think this report is particularly useful and helpful in highlighting this lack of religious freedom in North Korea in one of the most abusive machines in the world towards human rights and towards a lack of human dignity and towards a lack of religious freedom in North Korea.

And so I congratulate the commission for putting forward this report.

I'm delighted to see you doing it and I hope that we continue to use this in the push for human rights and religious freedoms around the world.

Thank you very much.

MR. CROMARTIE:

Senator, thank you.

Thank you for coming by.

SEN. BROWNBACK:

My pleasure.

MR. CROMARTIE:

Would you entertain a question or two from the - if they have one?

SEN. BROWNBACK:

Yes, I'd be happy to, if they have some.

MR. CROMARTIE:

I don't see anyone standing but if there's any questions for the senator, you might ask it now.

Yes, sir.

Q:

Senator, Kent Klein, Voice of America.

What specific actions would you advocate the United States taking toward North Korea and toward China to put an end to some of this behavior.

I mean, do you think President Bush could skip the opening ceremonies in Beijing?

SEN. BROWNBACK:

I think the United States needs to take a clear action towards North Korea and clear action towards China on these abuses.

I think one of the things that we need to do and to raise it in a much higher profile is in the Six-Party Talks that are taking place right now regarding the North Korean, that a human-rights portfolio be added and be in the strategic mix.

And I think we should make a very clear request in those Six-Party Talks that the North Koreans will close the gulags that are used to house political prisoners and religious prisoners.

Let's make a very clear request and ask the other countries in the Six-Party Talks to back them up.

I also think, clearly, China needs to stand by its requirements that it has signed in the UNHCR, that the Chinese have not abided by this in regard to North Korean refugees.

They treat North Korean refugees as economic migrants instead of as people seeking religious freedom or political freedom.

And they need to let the UNHCR interview North Korean refugees fleeing into China to determine their status and to let them pass freely through to South Korea, to the United States, or other spots around the world.

The Chinese are not doing that.

Also, I think we need to raise China's human trafficking that's taking place of North Korean refugees.

The number of women that are coming out of North Korea and then being trafficked inside China is alarming.

And I believe it's quite large and enormous in the number that are actually being trafficked.

That's something that needs to be brought up and highlighted of China's record and of China's role as an enabler of human-rights abuses being done by North Korea.

But it doesn't end there; it's Tibet, it's North Korea, it's Burma, it's Darfur.

China's hands are all over those human rights abuses for what they are doing to enable that in those various countries around the world.

Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for allowing my -

MR. CROMARTIE:

Well, thank you for your time, senator.

SEN. BROWNBACK:

To come in and interrupt your presentation but I'm delighted that you're doing it and pushing forward.

MR. CROMARTIE:

Interrupt us anytime, senator.

We'd be glad to have you.

Thank you for coming.

Do you remember where you were?

Let me reintroduce you.

The imam will continue where he was.

Let these people get out of here first.

Thank you.

Go ahead.

IMAM EID:

Security officials draw a distinction between recent converts who acquired religion while in China and all believers whose families have been multi-generational religious devotees.

New religious converts are targeted for especially stringent punishments as the growth in Christianity is perceived as a security threat.

The issue of refugees and their repatriation from China is another reason why religion is such an important issue.

Violations of religious freedom concerns are central to North Korean refugees' claims that they

are legitimate asylum-seekers and that as such, they need protection from China, where they have taken refuge.

Contrary to claims made by the Chinese government, repatriated North Koreans have legitimate fears of persecution upon return.

There are reports that China is halting even so-called quiet migrations of the small numbers of North Koreans who are able to reach the United Nation refugee agency in Beijing.

China finally must recognize that its international obligation to protect refugees is paramount over its bilateral agreement with North Korea to repatriate asylum seekers.

China, therefore, must provide protection for asylum seekers, allow the U.N. refugee agency access to the border region and allow the humanitarian efforts to aid North Koreans who are hiding, often exploited, and hunted.

We hope that the summit between President Bush and President Lee will create a united front.

Along with Japan, the U.S. and South Korea must work to persuade China that it is in Beijing's interest to protect refugees, stop repatriation, and allow humanitarian assistance to follow to asylum seekers at their border.

Chairman Cromartie.

MR. CROMARTIE:

Thank you.

Now, let me just conclude by saying that we believe that the upcoming summit is an opportunity for Washington and Seoul to work together to address human rights and humanitarian concerns in North Korea.

With a united front between Seoul and Washington, China can no longer point to South Korea's reluctance to put greater pressure on North Korea as justification of its own foot dragging on the refugee protections.

The nuclear issue is of prime importance in the Six-Party talks but human rights violations and humanitarian disasters are critical concerns for stability on the Korean peninsula.

The commission has long believed that these two issues should not be addressed separately.

Human rights violations and belligerent international behavior are often linked.

There is an opportunity to create - along with Japan - a common policy to bring real pressure on North Korea, not for regime change, perhaps, but at least regime transformation so that North Koreans no longer have to live in hunger and fear and deprivation.

So the commission urges President Bush and President Lee to consider new policy alternatives; in particular, seeking ways to link security issues, human rights, refugees, abductions, and economic support together in the negotiations with North Korea.

These issues should become part of a policy of open engagement with North Korea, one that encourages dialogue on a whole host of issues while continuing to address the security problem.

The commission also sees an opportunity in this summit for further cooperation on human efforts on North Korea, efforts that have been opposed by Seoul in the past.

The humanitarian and human rights catastrophe that has unfolded in North Korea over the last decade leaves no doubt that the North Korea of Kim Jong Il is a regional security threat, whether or not it possesses nuclear materials.

The eyewitness testimony provided in this new book, "A Prison Without Bars," and the commission's earlier report are important for U.N. deliberations about whether North Korea's harsh treatment of repatriated refugees and others for so-called political offenses may constitute such severe violations of international human rights treaties that together with the political destabilization of the region and neighboring countries, North Korea's systematic human-rights abuses constitute a threat to the peace that requires urgent action by the U.N. Security Council.

Now, let me stop here and ask for your questions.

Please identify yourself and your organization, if you will.

And if you have a question, please come to the microphone.

And if you don't have any questions, we'll be dismissed.

(Laughter.)

Yes, sir.

Q:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Kent Klein, Voice of America.

Thank you.

What's new in this report?

I mean, we've known for some time that North Korea represses its people in a great many ways.

But what's new in this report that adds a greater sense of urgency?

MR. CROMARTIE:

Well, I mean, I would just say and then I'll let Commission staffer Scott Flipse speak to it also, but it's really an updating of the previous report, further documentation, new and fresh information about the atrocities that are so prevalent in North Korea.

I mean, I set up the last report - and this is not a comment on the author, David Hawk, who is here with us - but it's a hard report to read.

These atrocities are so atrocious, if you will, so ghastly that having further documentation of it only adds to the urgency of the issue.

Scott, would you comment?

SCOTT FLIPSE:

Yeah, there's three things I think need to be highlighted.

The first is that we have evidence, now, that there is clandestine religious activity going on in North Korea - new religious activity, not the old suppressed and repressed religious activity that occurred before 1945.

And that is coming from cross-border contacts with China.

And that the North Korean security forces believe this is a security threat, a destabilizing actor that they're trying to halt through the types of infiltration in Korean churches and South Korean humanitarian organizations and by setting up mock prayer meetings in North Korea.

The second thing, which I think is important here, is to sort of put the lie to the Chinese notion that North Koreans are economic migrants.

This is what the Commission heard during its trip to China when it engaged China's officials on this issue.

But this report, I think, shows again, that one of the first questions that are asked of repatriated North Koreans is what their affiliations were, religious or South Korean affiliations, humanitarian organizations, and whether or not they have - they've converted to Christianity.

Again, it's a security concern that's viewed.

That last thing, which I think is important to stress is that, you know, the commission has done the work on what we call Kim Il-Sungism or the strength of Juche, which is an ideological commitment, veneration of the Kim family, which we believe is not only a matter of social control but the basis for the political legitimacy of the Kim Jong-Il regime.

And we've done questions on this and we don't see - even the fact that Kim Il-Sungism is the basis for their political legitimacy that this allegiance to Kim Il-Sungism is waning; that they remain strong.

It remains requirements and rituals for every North Korean to attend weekly services and criticism sessions.

And so I think this goes to the question of whether or not the Kim Jong-Il regime is politically strong and we consider - at least on the ideological level that it is.

So those three things, I think, need to be highlighted and that they're new.

MR. CROMARTIE:

Thank you.

Any other questions?

Well, if that's the case, be sure to pick up extra copies of the report outside. Hand them out.

Give them to your colleagues.

And at 2:00, we're going to have a - and I'm going to give a minute or two in case there's a question, but at 2:00, we're going to have a panel discussion and you're welcome back to that.

You want to say any more about that, Scott, about the panel?

Tell them about it.

MR. FLIPSE:

At 2:00, co-sponsored with the Congressional Korean Caucus, we're going to hold an event with experts who are already here, I see, to talk about not only current conditions but suggestions for the upcoming summit about what to do about these type of problems, particularly with some of the type of things that the commission has recommended and that you heard from Congressman Royce and Senator Brownback on ways - creative ways - either through diplomacy, multilateral or bilateral diplomacy, to address human rights conditions within a security framework.

So we'll have that at 2:00

MR. CROMARTIE:

So please, come and join us.

Thank you.

(END)